

See the world of Louise Bourgeois through the eyes of Jenny Holzer

January 14, 2022 | By Emily Dinsdale

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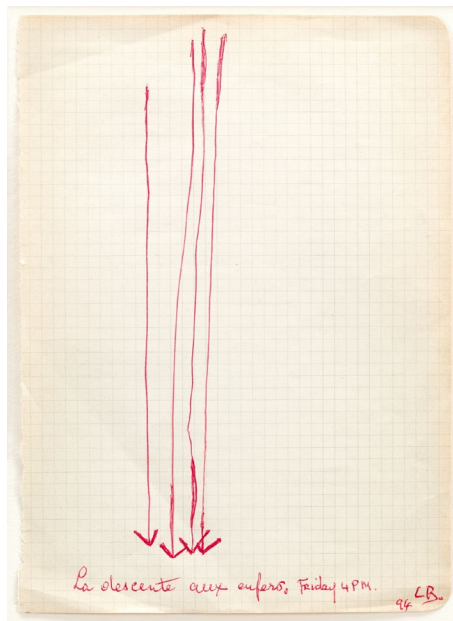


Louise Bourgeois in her home on 20th Street in New York (2004)Photography Pouran Esrafiy.

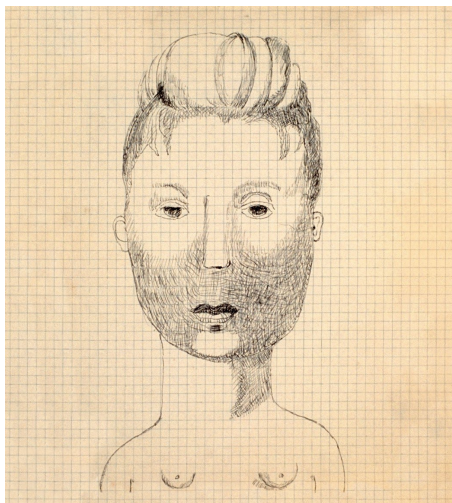
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Curated by Jenny Holzer, *The Violence of Handwriting Across a Page* is an upcoming exhibition of Louise Bourgeois' most incisive, emotionally-charged artworks

As one of the most acclaimed artists of her generation, Holzer is known for displaying provocative text in public spaces. While her large-scale installations have famously involved projecting statements or fragments of prose, poetry, cultural criticism, and political rhetoric onto institutions and landmarks, her smaller-scale but equally incendiary projects have entailed the American artist disseminating subversive text on a variety of more modest, everyday objects such as t-shirts, condoms, books, cups, and golf balls.



Louise Bourgeois, "La descente aux enfers, Friday 4pm" (1994), Red ink on graph paper, 20.3 x 14.6 cm
Photography Christopher Burke. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich,



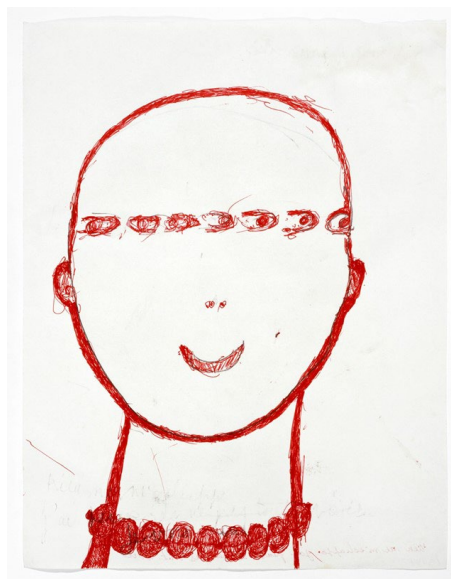
Louise Bourgeois, Self Portrait (1942), Ink on graph paper, 27.9 x 21.6 cm
Photography Zindman Fremont. © The Easton Foundation
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Louise Bourgeois, "Untitled (I Have been to Hell and Back)" (1996), Embroidered handkerchief, 49.5 x 45.7

Photography Christopher Burke. Photography Zindman Fremont.

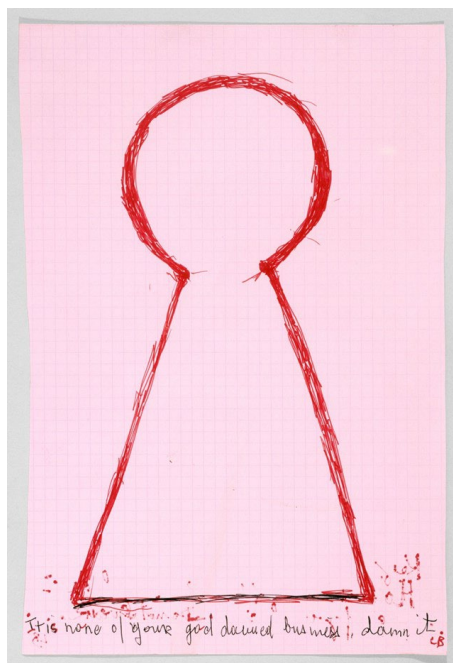
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Louise Bourgeois, "Nothing Escapes Me" (2001), Red ink and pencil on paper, 27.9 x 21.6 cm

Photography Christopher Burke. Photography Zindman Fremont.

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Louise Bourgeois, "Key Hole" (2005), Ink on pink graph paper, 27.9 x 18.7 cm

Photography Christopher Burke.

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Louise Bourgeois, "Couple" (2009), Gouache and colored pencil on paper, diptych, 59.7 x 91.4 cm

Photography Christopher Burke. Photography Zindman Fremont.

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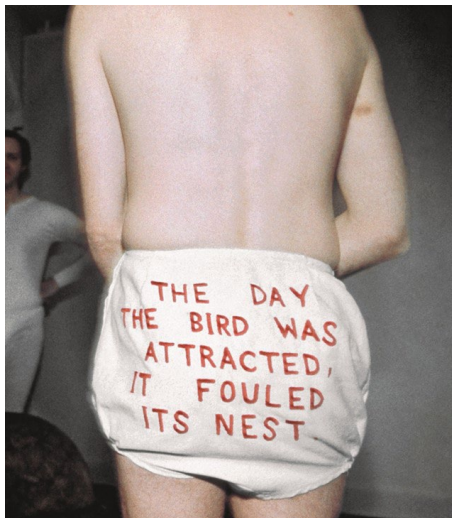
Louise Bourgeois, "The Family" (2007), Gouache and pencil on paper, suite of 14, 59.7 x 45.7 cm

Photography Christopher Burke. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



Louise Bourgeois, Self Portrait (2008), Gouache on paper, 36.8 x 27.9 cm

Photography Christopher Burke. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



Louise Bourgeois, Garment from the performance of "She Lost It" (1992)

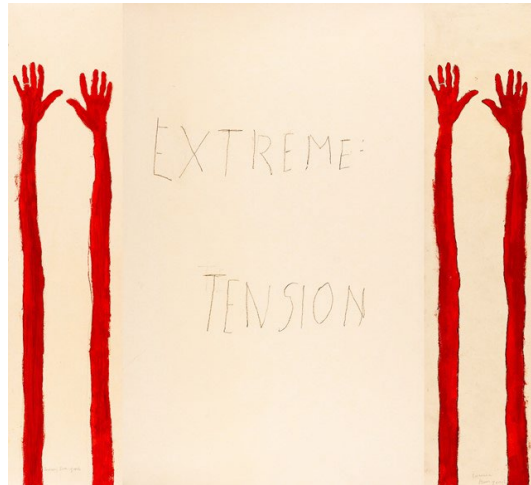
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Louise Bourgeois, "The Destruction of the Father" (1974–2017), 1974–2017,
Archival polyurethane resin, wood, fabric and red light, HxBxT: 237.8 x 362.3 x 248.6 cm
Photography Johee Kim. Collection Glenstone Museum, Potomac, Maryland © ProLitteris, Zurich



Louise Bourgeois in her home on 20th Street in New York (2004)
Photography Pouran Esrafiy. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich



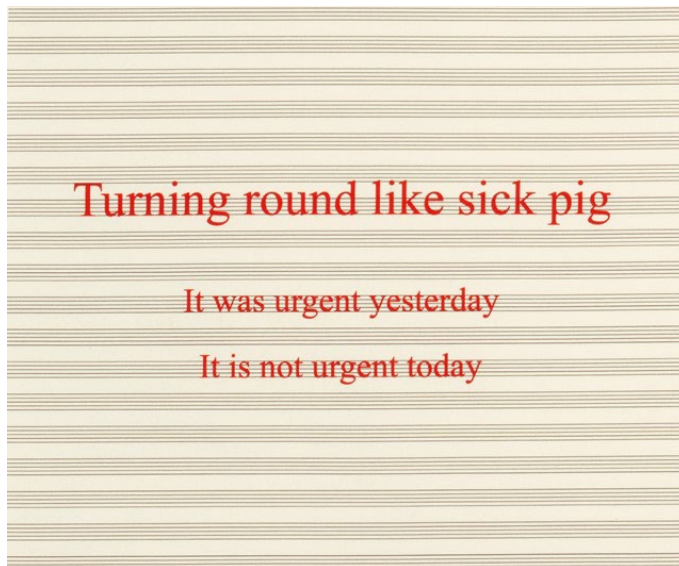
Louise Bourgeois, "Extreme tension" (2007) Mat. / Technik: Etching and mixed media on paper (11 panels of varied dimensions) Masse: Blatt: je 148.6 x 162.6 cm Photo Credit: Photo: Benjamin Shiff

Photography Zindman Fremont. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



Louise Bourgeois, "Hole of Anxiety" (1999), Wall relief: lead, fabric, thread and steel, 18.1 x 22.9 cm

Photography Christopher Burke © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



Louise Bourgeois, "Hours of the Day" (2006). Archival dyes digitally printed on cloth, suite of 25. 44.5 x 68.6 cm
Photography Zindman Fremont. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



Louise Bourgeois, "I Pick on Everyone Dead or Alive" (1999), Lead and steel. 21 x 31.1 x 1.3 cm
Photography Christopher Burke © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



**Louise Bourgeois, "Nature Study" (1984), Red wax over fiberglass with aluminum –
Stainless steel, glass and wood vitrine. HxBxT: 76.2 x 48.3 x 38.1 cm**

Photography Allan Finkelman. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



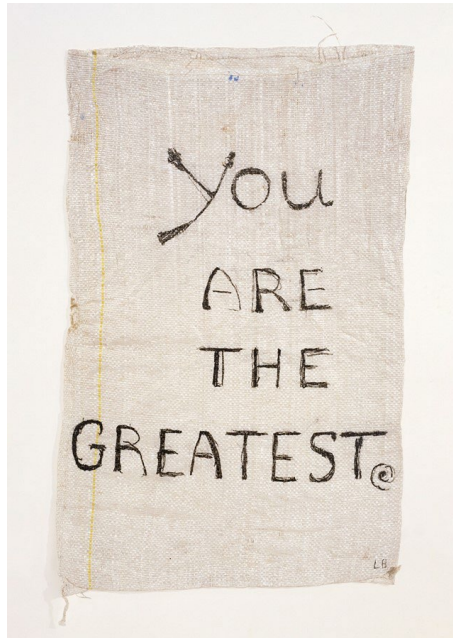
Louise Bourgeois, "Topiary" (2005), Marble and wood, 153 x 99.1 x 99.1 cm

Photography Christopher Burke. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



Louise Bourgeois, "Twosome" (1991), Steel, paint and electric light, 190.5 x 193 x 1244.6 cm

Photography Peter Bellamy. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris



Louise Bourgeois, "Your Are the Greatest" (1991), Ink on fabric, 64.8 x 41.3 cm

Photography Christopher Burke. © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY



**Portrait of Jenny Holzer (1982), taken at the installation: "Jenny Holzer, Lee, Aron Fink",
American Graffiti Gallery, Amsterdam (1982)**

Photography Aad van den Born - BFN. © ProLitteris, Zurich

The work of Louise Bourgeois may have aligned at times with significant moments in the history of 20th century avant-garde art, converging at points with the development of abstract expressionism and surrealism, yet Bourgeois always remained faithful to her own distinct artistic vision. The late French-American artist is perhaps best known for her large-scale sculptures, such as her series of gothic, monumental spiders cast in bronze and steel, but she was also a prolific painter, printer and textile artist. Even at the time of her death in 2010, aged 98, Bourgeois was still actively working, putting together an exhibition of her fabric art.

An upcoming exhibition, *The Violence of Handwriting Across a Page* at Kunstmuseum Basel, will allow the unique opportunity to re-experience the work of Louise Bourgeois through the unique perspective of Jenny Holzer. Curated by Holzer (with the help of Dr Anita Haldemann), the exhibition represents a remarkable encounter between two powerful artists who may at first glance seem unlikely companions.

Their bodies of work may glancingly appear to be dissimilar from one another, yet the two art luminaries are united not only by their feminism sensibility but in their overarching curiosity about the machinations of desire, intimacy, power, jealousy, and rejection. While Bourgeois' work is emotionally and psychologically charged and Holzer's most known works are more explicitly politically charged, they converge in the moments at which the personal becomes the political and the political becomes the personal.

Their mutual fascination with the written word also unfolds throughout the series of exhibition rooms which explore the many ways in which language was a fundamental aspect of Bourgeois' multifaceted practice. She wrote obsessively and prolifically as a way of charting the depths of her own psyche as well as a means of processing and healing trauma and grief. Her archive includes extensive volumes of diaries and correspondence, many of which later appeared on a number of artworks.



Louise Bourgeois, "I Pick on Everyone Dead or Alive" (1999), Lead and steel. 21 x 31.1 x 1.3 cm Photography Christopher Burke © The Easton Foundation/2021 ProLitteris, Zurich, and VAGA at Artists' Rights Society (ARS) NY

"I Pick on Everyone Dead or Alive" (1999) is a lead plaque bearing this darkly humorous statement of intent. Her 1992 exhibition *She Lost It* relayed a narrative of loss across a series of textiles and garments. A pair of underpants from the show was embroidered with the intriguing statement: "The day the bird was attracted it fouled the nest", while a 54-metre-long banner is emblazoned with the words: "A man and a woman lived together. On one evening he did not come back from work, and she waited. She kept on waiting and she grew littler and littler. Later, a neighbour stopped by out of friendship and there he found her, in the armchair, the size of a pea."

Bourgeois' poetic, ambiguous, and freighted use of language is reminiscent here of Holzer's *Truisms* (1977), which re-appropriated a series of received wisdom, presenting them as a seemingly impartial list of maxims and statements such as "You are guileless in your dreams", "All things are delicately connected", and "Romantic love was invented to manipulate women".

Abandoning the more conventional chronological approach, Holzer instead seeks out more interesting and unusual thematic connections between Bourgeois' artworks. Each of the nine galleries functions as an autonomous installation with a distinct theme, yet together they create a complex dialogue about identity, sexuality, loss, life, birth, death, and the fear of abandonment.

Using the augmented-reality app she recently developed as part of *Like Beauty In Flames* at the Guggenheim Bilbao, Holzer will transform Bourgeois' "The Destruction of the Father" (1974) into a multisensory AR experience. In her signature style, an LED frieze on the facade of the museum's Neubau gallery will display fragments of text taken directly from Bourgeois' archive. And, transcending the designated exhibition space even further, the artistic dialogue between the two great artists will continue in what promises to be an incredibly moving apotheosis to the exhibition, when excerpts from Bourgeois' texts will be projected by Holzer across the facades of public buildings throughout the city.

Take a look at the gallery above for a glimpse of some of the works on display in the upcoming exhibition.

Louise Bourgeois X Jenny Holzer: The Violence of Handwriting Across a Page will run from February 19 – May 15 2022 at Kunstmuseum Basel